

1     **CONTENT PROVISION, DISTRIBUTION, REGISTRATION, MANAGEMENT,**  
2                             **AND REPRODUCTION**

3     FIELD OF THE INVENTION

4     The present invention relates to additional information  
5     distribution. More particularly it relates to  
6     distributing additional information using the free  
7     distribution of digital content.

8     BACKGROUND

9     Digital content is a commodity that can be freely  
10    exchanged by anyone via a network, such as the Internet,  
11    because of the ease with which it can be stored, copied  
12    and transmitted. Relatively recently, as Internet use  
13    continues to grow, there has been a great increase in the  
14    speed at which data travels over communication lines,  
15    until today, not only music data but also much larger data  
16    packages, such as those for video data, can be rapidly  
17    exchanged. Meanwhile, in Japan a reappraisal of  
18    communication fees and access fees is producing dramatic  
19    results, while an infrastructure permitting uninterrupted  
20    connections is gradually being established. As everyone  
21    knows, in this environment the practice of accessing and  
22    downloading free popular content available via the  
23    Internet has expanded explosively, and momentarily will be  
24    common throughout the world.

1 There are well known examples of systems established for  
2 the distribution of free content. These systems are based  
3 on P2P file programs that facilitate the exchange and use  
4 in common of files via the Internet, without requiring the  
5 intervention of a central server. With these systems,  
6 music available at the sites of users registered with a  
7 network can be downloaded for free from anywhere in the  
8 world.

9 However, these systems do not incorporate mechanisms for  
10 managing copyrights or right of use of registered content,  
11 data recorded on CDs, for example, the copying of which is  
12 inhibited may be uploaded. And in actuality, most users  
13 acquiring content in this manner maybe guilty of copyright  
14 infringement, regardless of whether they are aware of it  
15 or not.

16 In a further attempt to resolve the problem presented by  
17 the provision of free content, a move has been made to  
18 provide a technique whereby compensation would be paid  
19 musicians whose music is distributed for free. In one  
20 example, a technique allows a content owner to enter a  
21 voice advertisement in an MP3 file, for which a  
22 standardized compression system called MPEG-1 Audio  
23 Layer-III is used. This technique is intended for use in  
24 the preparation of music files for which benefits are  
25 forthcoming even when the music is distributed for free,  
26 and the development of a system whereby royalty payments  
27 would be made to musicians, publishing companies and

1 record companies.

2 The intent of this technique is the inclusion in content  
3 of advertisements that would consistently garner  
4 sponsorship fees that could be shared among composers,  
5 etc. However, were this idea adopted, an advertisement  
6 could be inserted into content only one time, and since  
7 the advertisement could not be rewritten, it would be  
8 monotonously reproduced, no matter how many years had  
9 elapsed. In addition, it would be difficult to track  
10 usage frequencies, and advertisers would have to pay usage  
11 fees regardless of how effective their advertisements  
12 were. In this case, the assessment of high advertisement  
13 fees would not justified, and thus, the return afforded  
14 the persons who provided the content would be uncertain.  
15 Further, since a fixed, specific format would be used, the  
16 content could not be reproduced by portable players  
17 commonly available on the market.

18 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

19 To resolve the above technical problems, it is one aspect  
20 of the present invention to provide a system for using,  
21 for aggressive business advertising purposes, the  
22 properties of media that powerfully convey content.

23 It is another aspect of the present invention to resolve  
24 the problems presented by the illegal use of downloading  
25 services for providing free content and to devise a legal

1 system.

2 It is an additional aspect of the present invention to  
3 flexibly set up added information, such as advertisements  
4 introduced by the same content, and an effective time for  
5 the presentation of the additional information.

6 It is a further aspect of the present invention to provide  
7 a system that ensures the equitable sharing with content  
8 providers of rewards consonant with how helpful content is  
9 when used as an advertisement and/or other content medium.

10 To achieve the above aspects, according to the present  
11 invention, an advertising or other content distribution  
12 system employs a so-called P2P system for the distribution  
13 of free content, and provides a service for the  
14 distribution of advertisement and/or other content to  
15 users who desire to acquire the free content. That is,  
16 according to a first example embodiment of the invention,  
17 an advertisement and/or other content distribution system  
18 comprises: a content provider system, for providing for a  
19 user terminal content to which an identifier has been  
20 added; a user terminal, for receiving the content, via a  
21 network, from the content provider system, and for  
22 identifying and outputting, to the network, the identifier  
23 added to the content; and an advertisement and/or other  
24 content provider system, for the distribution to the user  
25 terminal, based on the identifier output by the user  
26 terminal, of a predetermined advertisement and/or other  
27 content via the network.

1 In some cases, the advertisement and/or other content  
2 distribution system further comprises: an agent server  
3 system, for managing the identifier added to the content,  
4 wherein the agent server system employs the identifier,  
5 output by the user terminal, to transmit an advertisement  
6 and/or other content distribution trigger to the  
7 advertisement and/or other content provider system for the  
8 distribution of the predetermined advertisement and/or  
9 other content. This configuration is preferable in that  
10 an advertisement and/or other content can be introduced  
11 systemwide using the same content, and an effective  
12 propagation period for the advertisement and/or other  
13 content can be flexibly set.

14 According to another aspect of the invention, a content  
15 registration/management system comprises: content  
16 registration request reception means, for receiving a  
17 request for content registration from a content provider  
18 that provides content; identifier provision means, for  
19 setting an identifier, based on the request that is  
20 received, to be added to the content that is to be  
21 provided a user terminal, and for providing the identifier  
22 to a content provider; and a content ledger database, for  
23 storing information related to the identifier provided the  
24 content provider.

25 In an example embodiment, a particular content  
26 registration/management system comprises: identifier  
27 reception means, for receiving from a user terminal an

1 identifier provided for the user terminal; and content  
 2 reproduction information collection means, for collecting,  
 3 based on the reception of the identifier, information  
 4 related to the reproduction of content, such as a count  
 5 used for calculating the frequency whereat the identifier  
 6 is received. With this configuration, it is preferable  
 7 that a count be used to represent the contribution level  
 8 of the content as an advertisement and/or other content  
 9 medium.

10 Further, the content registration/management system often  
 11 comprises: an advertisement and/or other content ledger  
 12 database for registering a list of contents that can be  
 13 used as advertisement and/or other content media; and  
 14 notification means for searching the advertisement and/or  
 15 other content ledger database based on the received  
 16 identifier, and for transmitting an advertisement and/or  
 17 other content distribution request to an advertiser.

18 According to an additional aspect of the invention, an  
 19 advertisement and/or other content distribution management  
 20 system is provided for managing the distribution of an  
 21 advertisement and/or other content to a user terminal. In  
 22 an example embodiment the system comprises: an  
 23 advertisement and/or other content ledger database, for  
 24 the storage therein of a list to which content used as an  
 25 advertisement and/or other content medium for the  
 26 advertisement and/or other content and information  
 27 concerning an advertisement and/or other content  
 28 distribution site for disseminating the advertisement

1 and/or other content when the content is reproduced;  
2 reception means, for receiving a content ID output by the  
3 user terminal when the content is reproduced; search  
4 means, for performing a search, based on the content ID,  
5 of the advertisement and/or other content ledger database  
6 for the predetermined advertisement and/or other content  
7 distribution site; and notification means, for issuing to  
8 the predetermined advertisement and/or other content  
9 distribution site, when found, an advertisement and/or  
10 other content distribution request.

11 The reception means receives address information for the  
12 user terminal, and the notification means transmits the  
13 address information to the advertisement and/or other  
14 content distribution site. As a result, the advertisement  
15 and/or other content distribution destination is  
16 manifested, and can contribute to an increase in the  
17 effect produced by advertising through the distribution,  
18 for example, of an advertisement and/or other content that  
19 is appropriate for the specific user.

20 According to a further aspect of the invention, a content  
21 provider system comprises: storage means, for storing  
22 pertinent content and a corresponding content ID for  
23 identifying the pertinent content; reception means, for  
24 receiving a content download request from a user terminal;  
25 and content provision means, for reading, based on the  
26 content downloading request, the pertinent content and the  
27 corresponding content ID from the storage means, and for  
28 providing for the user terminal the pertinent content and

1 the content ID.

2 The storage means is used to store a content with a  
3 content ID being embedded. Further, before the content is  
4 provided for the user terminal, the content ID may be  
5 added to the content. That is, in the storage means the  
6 content and the content ID may be separately stored, or  
7 the content may be stored with the content ID being  
8 embedded.

9 In a further example embodiment, the content provider  
10 system further comprises: registration request output  
11 means, for outputting a registration request to an agent  
12 server that manages a content ID; and content ID reception  
13 means, for receiving, based on the registration request,  
14 the content ID from the agent server. The agent server  
15 can also receive a content ID embedding tool, or a service  
16 for embedding a content ID.

17 According to a still further aspect and example embodiment  
18 of the invention, a user terminal comprises: content  
19 reproduction means, for reproducing content wherein a  
20 content ID has been embedded; detection means, for  
21 detecting the embedded content ID when the content is to  
22 be reproduced; notification means, for transmitting the  
23 detected content ID to a predetermined server via a  
24 network; and advertisement and/or other content data  
25 reception means for receiving from a predetermined  
26 advertisement and/or other content distribution site, via  
27 a network, advertisement and/or other content data



1 corresponding to the content ID. During the reproduction  
2 of the content, the content reproduction means can output  
3 received advertisement and/or other content data having a  
4 pop-up form, for example.

5 According to one more aspect of the invention, an  
6 advertisement and/or other content distributor system  
7 comprises: registration request output means, for  
8 outputting an advertisement and/or other content  
9 registration request to an agent server system that  
10 manages an identifier included in predetermined content;  
11 address information reception means, for receiving address  
12 information for a user terminal that reproduces content;  
13 and advertisement and/or other content data distribution  
14 means, for distributing advertisement and/or other content  
15 data that is output to the user terminal for content  
16 reproduction.

17 Further, the advertisement and/or other content  
18 distributor system also comprises: bill reception means,  
19 for receiving from the agent server system a bill  
20 corresponding to the frequency whereat content is  
21 reproduced; and advertisement and/or other content fee  
22 payment means, for paying an advertisement and/or other  
23 content fee in accordance with the bill. This  
24 configuration is generally preferable because specific  
25 charging can be performed for an advertisement and/or  
26 other content distributor in accordance with an obtained  
27 profit. In addition, with this arrangement, compensation  
28 corresponding to the contribution made by content can be

distributed to the content provider.

The present invention can be implemented as a content reproduction program that permits a computer to reproduce content in which a content ID is embedded, or as a storage medium on which a computer stores a computer-readable program. The content reproduction program permits a computer to perform: a function (process) for detecting a content ID embedded in content; a function (process) for transmitting the content ID via a network; and a function (process) for, before content reproduction, outputting advertisement and/or other content data, based on the content ID, that are received via a network and have a predetermined form for displaying an advertisement and/or other content, for example, while interacting with content. The storage medium can be a CD-ROM, a DVD, memory, or a hard disk on which a computer stores a computer-readable program.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram for explaining an advertisement and/or other content distribution system according to one embodiment of the present invention. Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing the configuration of an agent server system 10. Figs. 3A and 3B are diagrams showing example data stored in a content ledger DB 11 and an advertisement and/or

1 other content ledger DB 12.  
2 Fig. 4 is a block diagram showing the configuration of a  
3 content provider system 30.  
4 Fig. 5 is a block diagram showing the configuration of a  
5 user terminal 50.  
6 Fig. 6 is a flowchart showing the processing performed by  
7 a reproduction device (reproduction software) 55 having a  
8 content ID detection function.  
9 Fig. 7 is a block diagram showing the configuration of an  
10 advertiser system 70.

11 DESCRIPTION OF THE SYMBOLS

12 10: Agent server system  
13 11: Content ledger DB  
14 12: advertisement and/or other content ledger DB  
15 13: Content registration/ledger preparation unit  
16 14: Content ledger search unit  
17 15: advertisement and/or other content  
18 registration/ledger preparation unit  
19 16: advertisement and/or other content ledger search  
20 unit  
21 17: advertisement and/or other content distribution  
22 requesting unit  
23 18: Content reproduction count aggregating unit  
24 19: advertisement and/or other content income  
25 distribution unit  
26 21: Content registration request reception unit  
27 22: Content ID transmission unit  
28 23: advertisement and/or other content registration

1 request reception unit  
2 24: Registration notification unit  
3 25: Search request reception unit  
4 26: Search result transmission unit  
5 27: Content ID reception unit  
6 30: Content provider system  
7 31: Content DB  
8 32: Content registration requesting unit  
9 33: Content ID reception unit  
10 34: Content ID embedding unit  
11 35: Downloading request receiving unit  
12 36: ID-added content disclosing unit  
13 50: User terminal  
14 51: Content search requesting unit  
15 52: Search results reception unit  
16 53: Content download requesting unit  
17 54: Content reception unit  
18 55: Reproduction device (reproduction software)  
19 having a content ID detection function  
20 56: ID detection compatible player downloading unit  
21 57: Content ID notification unit  
22 58: User ID notification unit  
23 59: Advertisement and/or other content data reception  
24 unit  
25 70: Advertiser system (advertisement and/or other  
26 content distributor (provider) system)  
27 71: Advertisement and/or other content DB  
28 72: advertisement and/or other content preparation  
29 unit  
30 73: Registration requesting unit

1 74: Registration notification reception unit  
2 75: Addressee user ID notification reception unit  
3 76: advertisement and/or other content data  
4 distribution unit.

5 DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

6 The present invention provides, methods, systems and  
7 apparatus for using, for aggressive business advertising  
8 purposes, the properties of media that powerfully convey  
9 content. The invention also allows one to resolve the  
10 problems presented by the illegal use of downloading  
11 services for providing free content and to devise a legal  
12 system. It also provides one to flexibly set up added  
13 information, such as advertisements introduced by the same  
14 content, and an effective time for the presentation of the  
15 additional information. It further provides systems that  
16 enable equitable sharing with content providers of rewards  
17 consonant with how helpful content is when used as an  
18 advertisement and/or other content medium.

19 An example embodiment of the present invention will now be  
20 described in detail while referring to the accompanying  
21 drawings. Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram for explaining  
22 the configuration of an advertisement and/or other content  
23 distribution system according to the embodiment. In this  
24 embodiment, the system comprises: an agent server system  
25 10, which contributes greatly to the tie-up of content and  
26 an advertisement and/or other content; a content provider

1 system 30, for providing digital content; a user terminal  
 2 50, for downloading and reproducing digital content that  
 3 is provided and displaying the content and an  
 4 advertisement and/or other content; and an advertiser  
 5 system (advertisement and/or other content distributor  
 6 (provider) system) 70 for distributing an advertisement  
 7 and/or other content to the user terminal 50, all of which  
 8 are connected via a network, such as the Internet. In  
 9 this embodiment, with this configuration, the registration  
 10 of content, such as music or video, the downloading of  
 11 content to the user terminal 50, the use of content and  
 12 the reproduction of an advertisement and/or other content,  
 13 and the creation and the preparation of a charge for an  
 14 advertisement and/or other content are performed. The  
 15 above described components (or the systems) can be  
 16 constituted by a single computer, or by multiple  
 17 computers. The content provider system 30, the agent  
 18 server system 10 and the advertiser system 70 may be  
 19 constituted by individual entities, or two or all of them  
 20 may be combined and be constituted by the same entity.

21 The agent server system 10 is related to the addition of a  
 22 registration number (content ID), an identifier, to  
 23 digital content provided by the content provider system  
 24 30. Further, the agent server system 10 transmits a  
 25 registration notification in response to a registration  
 26 request issued by the advertiser system 70, and provides  
 27 for the advertiser system 70 information concerning a user  
 28 who is an addressee. To implement these functions, the  
 29 agent server system 10 includes a content ledger DB

(database) 11, for storing a content management ledger, and an advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12, for storing an advertisement and/or other content management ledger.

The content provider system 30 includes a content DB 31, for storing digital content to be provided for the user terminal 50. A content ID is embedded in the digital content that is to be stored in the content DB 31. It should be noted, however, that the content and the content ID may be stored separately in the content DB 31, and before transmission of the content to the user terminal 50, the content ID may be embedded in the content.

The advertiser system 70 has an advertisement and/or other content DB 71 for storing advertisement and/or other content information to be distributed to the user terminal 50. The "advertiser" may be replaced by the "advertisement provider" or the "advertisement distributor". The advertiser system 70 can be constituted as an additional information provision site for providing additional information for the content in addition to the common advertisement and/or other content. The additional information to be provided can include information used to increase the resolution or to improve the tone quality of content that is first provided by the content provider system 30.

To easily understand the advertisement and/or other content distribution system of this embodiment, the processing performed by the individual components of this

system will be briefly explained while referring to Fig. 1. First, the agent server system 10 provides a content ID embedding tool or an embedding agent service for the content provider system 30 (arrow ①). While the content provider system 30 issues a digital content registration request to the agent server system 10 (arrow ②). The agent server system 10 also provides an advertisement and/or other content preparation tool or a preparation agent service for the advertiser system 70 (arrow ③). While the advertiser system 70 issues, to the agent server system 10, an advertisement and/or other content request and a request for the registration of a site that distributes an advertisement and/or other content (arrow ④).

Thereafter, the user terminal 50 issues an inquiry to the agent server system 10 and searches for preferred content (arrow ⑤), and then downloads the preferred content from the content provider system 30 (arrow ⑥). When the content is reproduced by the user terminal 50, the user terminal 50 transmits a content ID to the agent server system 10, which in turn transmits the content ID to the advertiser system 70 (arrow ⑦). Based on the received content ID, the advertiser system 70 distributes the advertisement and/or other content information stored in the advertisement and/or other content DB 71 to the user terminal 50 (arrow ⑧).

The configurations of the individual systems will now be



described in detail. Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the configuration of the agent server system 10. The agent server system 10 includes: a content registration request reception unit 21, for receiving a registration request from the content provider system 30, the owner of digital content; a content registration/ledger preparation unit 13, for registering content and for preparing a content ledger; and a content ID transmission unit 22, for transmitting the registration numbers (content IDs) of registered content to the content provider system 30. The information generated by the content registration/ledger preparation unit 13 is stored in the content ledger DB 11. The agent server system 10 further includes: a search request reception unit 25, for receiving a search request from the user terminal 50; a content ledger search unit 14, for searching for content preferred by a user based on the information stored in the content ledger DB 11, in accordance with the received request; and a search result transmission unit 26, for transmitting the search results to the user terminal 50.

The agent server system 10 also includes: an advertisement and/or other content registration request reception unit 23, for receiving a registration request from the advertiser system 70; an advertisement and/or other content registration/ledger preparation unit 15, for registering a site that distributes advertisements and/or other contents; and a registration notification unit 24, for transmitting to the advertiser system 70 the registered information, which is stored in the

advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12 by the advertisement and/or other content registration/ledger preparation unit 15. The agent server system 10 further includes: a content ID reception unit 27 for receiving the content ID from the user terminal 50, an advertisement and/or other content ledger search unit 16, for searching the advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12 by referring to the received content ID; and an advertisement and/or other content distribution requesting unit 17 for transmitting to the advertiser system 70 a user ID for the distribution addressee. Further, the system 10 includes: a content reproduction count aggregating unit 18, for counting the number of advertisement and/or other content request triggers issued based on the content ID obtained by the content ID reception unit 27, and for transmitting the aggregate to the advertiser system 70 as a reproduction count. Further, an advertisement and/or other content income distribution unit 19 distributes advertisement and/or other content fees to the content provider system 30 based on the results obtained by the content reproduction count aggregating unit 18.

Figs. 3A and 3B are diagrams showing example data stored in the content ledger DB 11 and the advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12. As is shown in Fig. 3A, content IDs, musicians' names, content names, content types, site information and line information are stored in the content ledger DB 11. In other words, the name of a content that can be downloaded and the link to the site whereat the content is available are prepared. As is

1 shown in Fig. 3B, content IDs, advertiser information,  
2 advertisement and/or other content conditions and  
3 advertisement and/or other content periods are stored in  
4 the advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12. In  
5 other words, a list of the contents that can be used as  
6 advertisement and/or other content media, and the sites of  
7 advertisers that transmit (re-direct) triggers in response  
8 to this are shown. The charge types in this embodiment  
9 are a rate charging system that is effective for a  
10 specific period of time, and a specific charging system  
11 that charges a fee in accordance with the number of  
12 triggers issued in response to advertisement and/or other  
13 content requests. For the specific charging system, a  
14 satisfactory amount of money consonant with received  
15 profit is paid, and a charge is determined in accordance  
16 with the results obtained by the content reproduction  
17 count aggregating unit 18. However, it is preferable that  
18 an upper limit be set to prevent payments from soaring.  
19 For example, as is shown in Fig. 3B, a predetermined  
20 condition, such as "up to 2000 times" or "up to 5000 times  
21 for users under 30", when user information is available,  
22 can be employed to set a limit. While for the rate  
23 charging system, a contract can be entered into that  
24 provides for trigger information for specified content to  
25 be transmitted to the advertiser system 70 for a specific  
26 period of time.

27 Fig. 4 is a block diagram showing the configuration of the  
28 content provider system 30. This system 30 includes, to  
29 fulfill content registration functions, a content



fulfill content search functions, a content search requesting unit 51, for outputting a request to the agent server system 10 for a search for preferred content, and a search results reception unit 52, for receiving the search results, as well as, for content downloading functions, a content download requesting unit 53, for outputting a content downloading request to the content provider system 30, and a content reception unit 54, for receiving content supplied by the content provider system 30 upon its reception of the downloading request. When downloading targeted content, the user terminal 50 downloads it directly from the content provider system 30, the site that owns the pertinent content. A user can select an arbitrary file form; however, if the file formatting is changed following the embedding of the content ID, it may be that the content ID embedded at the header will be erased and only a content ID that serves as an electronic watermark will be maintained.

The user terminal 50 often further includes: a reproduction device (reproduction software) 55 having a content ID detection function; an ID detection compatible player downloading unit 56, for downloading the reproduction software 55; a content ID notification unit 57; a user ID notification unit 58; and an advertisement and/or other content data reception unit 59, for receiving advertisement and/or other content data from the advertiser system 70. The content, which is downloaded by the content reception unit 54, is reproduced by the reproduction software 55. In this embodiment, a digital

1 content can be read by using a conventional player, but  
2 the content ID can not be identified. This is because  
3 while taking into account the convenience of users, no  
4 limitation is placed on the file formats. To encourage  
5 the downloading of the reproduction software 55, it is  
6 preferable that valid effects/incentives be provided as  
7 the result of downloading a new player. For example, if a  
8 priority right for obtaining a ticket to a concert given  
9 by a famous musician is provided users who download the  
10 reproduction software 55, this is an effective method for  
11 promoting the spread and the use of the software. The  
12 content ID, which is detected by the reproduction software  
13 55 that is thus provided for the user terminal 50, is  
14 transmitted to the agent server system 10 by the content  
15 ID notification unit 57, while the user ID notification  
16 unit 58 employs a cookie, for example, to transmit a user  
17 ID to the agent server system 10. Thereafter, based on  
18 the information transmitted by the content ID notification  
19 unit 57 and the user ID notification unit 58, the  
20 advertisement and/or other content data reception unit 59  
21 obtains advertisement and/or other content data from the  
22 advertiser system 70.

23 Fig. 6 is an example of a flowchart showing the processing  
24 performed by the reproduction device (reproduction  
25 software) 55 that includes the content ID detection  
26 function. First, the reproduction software 55 reproduces  
27 content that is received and downloaded by the content  
28 reception unit 54 (step 101). Then, a check is performed  
29 to determine whether the user terminal 50 is connected via

1 a network (step 102). If the user terminal 50 is not  
2 connected, the normal reproduction of the content is  
3 performed (step 103). Whereas if the user terminal 50 is  
4 connected, the content ID embedded in the content is  
5 detected (step 104) and the detected content ID is  
6 uploaded to the agent server system 10 connected via the  
7 network. A specific method is provided for the use of an  
8 agent (Aglet) to transit the content ID and the address of  
9 a user. The agent server system 10 refers to the internal  
10 advertisement and/or other content ledger DB 12, and  
11 transmits a trigger to the site of the advertiser system  
12 70, and if the user terminal 50 is not connected via the  
13 network, prevention of the reproduction of the content  
14 does not occur. Thereafter, an advertisement and/or other  
15 content obtained by the advertisement and/or other content  
16 data reception unit 59 is received, and the advertisement  
17 and/or other content, received in a pop-up window, for  
18 example, is reproduced, together with the content (step  
19 105). These data are displayed on the screen of a  
20 portable telephone or a PDA.

21 In this embodiment, as is described above, an  
22 advertisement and/or other content is tied to content, and  
23 a discount coupon, for example, can be distributed for a  
24 CD that is sold at a shop and is related to the content.  
25 When such an attractive "premium" is attached as an  
26 advertisement and/or other content, the inclination of a  
27 user to delete the link can be removed. Further, the  
28 system can be so designed that only information available  
29 via the link is set, or that information that is not

1 initially distributed is added later. These are unique  
2 points provided by this system.

3 Fig. 7 is an example of a block diagram showing the  
4 configuration of the advertiser system 70. The system 70  
5 includes: an advertisement and/or other content  
6 preparation unit 72, for preparing an advertisement and/or  
7 other content to be displayed on the screen of the user  
8 terminal 50; a registration requesting unit 73, for  
9 requesting from the agent server system 10 the  
10 advertisement and/or other content request or the  
11 registration of a site that distributes advertisements  
12 and/or other contents; and a registration notification  
13 reception unit 74, for receiving information indicating  
14 that a site is registered with the agent server system 10.

15 An advertisement and/or other content prepared by the  
16 advertisement and/or other content preparation unit 72 is  
17 stored in the advertisement and/or other content DB 71,  
18 together with information received by the registration  
19 notification reception unit 74. The advertiser system 70  
20 further includes, to fulfill the advertisement and/or  
21 other content distribution functions, an addressee user ID  
22 notification reception unit 75 for receiving, from the  
23 agent server system 10, an advertisement and/or other  
24 content distribution address, such as an ID address or a  
25 user ID; and an advertisement and/or other content data  
26 distribution unit 76 for the distribution to the user  
27 terminal 50, based on the received advertisement and/or  
28 other content distribution address, of an advertisement  
29 and/or other content stored in the advertisement and/or



1 other content DB 71. Although not shown, in accordance  
2 with the advertisement and/or other content fee payment  
3 process, a bill including a charge calculated using the  
4 reproduction count is received from the agent server  
5 system 10, and payment of the advertisement and/or other  
6 content fee is performed based on the bill.

7 The advertisement and/or other content prepared by the  
8 advertisement and/or other content preparation unit 72 is  
9 displayed, as is a panel type banner, on the PC screen of  
10 the user terminal 50 of a user or on the screen of a net  
11 connected terminal, such as a portable telephone or a PDA.

12 A pop-up screen may be employed for a display, and a Java  
13 applet form may be employed as a display form. The  
14 advertisement and/or other content is transmitted by  
15 "Push" to a designated IP address that is received by the  
16 addressee user ID notification reception unit 75; however,  
17 the guidelines and specifications for the preparation of  
18 an advertisement and/or other content can be designated  
19 and disclosed by a predetermined service provider (not  
20 shown). Further, the provision of preparation tools and  
21 preparation agent services can use as the basis for the  
22 establishment of a business.

23 As is described above, according to the model in this  
24 embodiment, an address is received from a user who  
25 distributes an advertisement and/or other content, and the  
26 advertisement and/or other content can be updated or  
27 changed at an arbitrary time. The advertisement and/or  
28 other content can also be updated when an error is found

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1 in the advertisement and/or other content or when the  
2 advertisement and/or other content are changed, and  
3 further information requiring an immediate response, such  
4 as the "remaining number of tickets", can be added. Thus,  
5 the problem presented by the possibility that an  
6 advertisement and/or other content prepared and  
7 distributed several years previously will continue to be  
8 reproduced indefinitely can be resolved. In addition, it  
9 is possible to distribute different information to each  
10 user based on the registered information as needed. For  
11 example, information concerning the age and preferences of  
12 a user can be acquired from information supplied by the  
13 user or can be obtained from a history of the content that  
14 the user has frequently accessed, and an advertisement  
15 and/or other content that will probably benefit the user  
16 can be identified and distributed. Also, advertisement  
17 and/or other content information that a user does not  
18 desire to receive can be obtained in advance, and can be  
19 used to selectively distribute acceptable announcements to  
20 the user. In addition, a content provider can use this  
21 system for advertising his music, recording or concert.  
22 In this case, it would be appropriate that the lowest  
23 advertiser or commission fee be paid the agent server  
24 system 10.

25 In this example embodiment, when the system for  
26 correlating multimedia content with metadata that relative  
27 to the content is externally located, added value can be  
28 provided for the content. In this instance, added value  
29 may be, for example, the performance of a search using an

1 index, a clipping of a specific scene or a link to  
2 relevant information. An advertisement and/or other  
3 content may also be positioned as a type of relevant  
4 information. As a result, a user of the content can pay  
5 an attention to the advertisement and/or other content  
6 information naturally, and the uncomfortable feeling often  
7 engendered by an advertisement and/or other content can be  
8 reduced. That is, so long as a service using metadata is  
9 satisfactory, the interest in metadata occurs  
10 automatically, so that there is a high probability that an  
11 advertisement and/or other content will draw the attention  
12 of a user.

13 In this embodiment, the property of explosively spreading  
14 media can be aggressively used for a business, such as an  
15 advertising business. That is, the size of the potential  
16 audience for advertisements and/or other contents can be  
17 actively increased by redistributing such as downloading  
18 or coping, while users at end terminals can legally enjoy  
19 free content, business owners can avail themselves of  
20 opportunities to expand sales through advertisements  
21 and/or other contents, and copyright holders can collect  
22 fees for the distribution of content. Therefore, business  
23 and culture can be mutually and safely developed, while  
24 the current random and illegal copying and the current  
25 electronic distribution system, which is not easy to use  
26 because of the due to the use of excessively ponderous  
27 protection mechanisms, can be eliminated. Moreover, the  
28 system of this embodiment, in addition to file  
29 downloading, can also be used for moving picture content,

1 and for streaming distribution.

2 Whether or not the system of this embodiment is widely  
3 employed depends in great part on how widespread is the  
4 mounting of the reproduction player reproduction software  
5 55. As is described above, the provision of incentives is  
6 one method by which new players can be encourage to  
7 download the new player. Another is a method, for  
8 example, whereby content having low image or low tone  
9 quality or that is incomplete is provided first, and when  
10 a search for a content ID is initiated by the reproduction  
11 software 55, the advertiser system 70 distributes content  
12 having high image or tone quality to which advertisement  
13 and/or other content information has been added. As an  
14 additional method, sample content may be provided first,  
15 and when a search for a content ID is requested by the  
16 reproduction software 55, complete, corresponding content  
17 may be provided by the advertiser system 70. Thereafter,  
18 for example, when a difference between the first content  
19 and content that can next be provided is transmitted with  
20 an advertisement and/or other content, the downloading of  
21 the reproduction software 55 will be performed frequently  
22 and widespread use of it will ensue.

23 In this embodiment, as is described above, an  
24 advertisement and/or other content to be introduced using  
25 the same content, or the effective period of time an  
26 advertisement and/or other content is to be used can be  
27 flexibly set. Further, the contribution provided by  
28 content when used as an advertisement and/or other content

1 medium can be evaluated by conducting an inquiry. And  
 2 thus, a specific basis (the actual profit accrued) can be  
 3 established for the calculation of a charge for the  
 4 services rendered an advertiser, and compensation  
 5 consonant with the contribution made by the content can be  
 6 distributed to the content provider. Furthermore, since a  
 7 content ID is embedded as an electronic watermark in the  
 8 content that is used, the same service can be provided by  
 9 content whose format has been changed, without having to  
 10 depend on a specific format. In addition, since the  
 11 preferences of users at advertisement and/or other content  
 12 distribution addresses can, to a degree, be deduced,  
 13 advertisements and/or other contents that are judged  
 14 appropriate for such users can be distributed, and the  
 15 effects produced by the advertisements and/or other  
 16 contents improved.

17 In this example embodiment, the data to be distributed has  
 18 been that which use advertisements. However, not only  
 19 general advertisement and/or other content information,  
 20 but also additional information corresponding to a content  
 21 ID can be provided for a user terminal 50. For example, a  
 22 portion of content may be intentionally separated, and  
 23 based on the content ID, the remaining content, which is  
 24 additional information provided by a predetermined site,  
 25 and the content is completed by the user terminal 50.  
 26 Further, as additional information, content having a high  
 27 image or tone quality may be distributed. That is,  
 28 additional information that is provided to increase  
 29 resolution or tone quality may be provided by a site based

1 on the content ID that serves as an identifier.

2 Thus, as is described above, according to the present  
3 invention, the property of explosively spreading media can  
4 be used for a business, such as an advertising business.

5 The present invention can be realized in hardware, software,  
6 or a combination of hardware and software. A visualization  
7 tool according to the present invention can be realized in a  
8 centralized fashion in one computer system, or in a  
9 distributed fashion where different elements are spread  
10 across several interconnected computer systems. Any kind of  
11 computer system - or other apparatus adapted for carrying  
12 out the methods and/or functions described herein - is  
13 suitable. A typical combination of hardware and software  
14 could be a general purpose computer system with a computer  
15 program that, when being loaded and executed, controls the  
16 computer system such that it carries out the methods  
17 described herein. The present invention can also be  
18 embedded in a computer program product, which comprises all  
19 the features enabling the implementation of the functions  
20 and/or methods described herein, and which - when loaded in  
21 a computer system - is able to carry out these methods  
22 and/or functions.

23 Computer program means or computer program in the present  
24 context include any expression, in any language, code or  
25 notation, of a set of instructions intended to cause a  
26 system having an information processing capability to  
27 perform a particular function either directly or after

1 conversion to another language, code or notation, and/or  
2 after reproduction in a different material form.

3 Thus the invention includes an article of manufacture which  
4 comprises a computer usable medium having computer readable  
5 program code means embodied therein for causing any  
6 function described above. The computer readable program  
7 code means in the article of manufacture comprises computer  
8 readable program code means for causing a computer to  
9 effect the steps of a method of this invention. Similarly,  
10 the present invention may be implemented as a computer  
11 program product comprising a computer usable medium having  
12 computer readable program code means embodied therein for  
13 causing a a function described above. The computer  
14 readable program code means in the computer program product  
15 comprising computer readable program code means for causing  
16 a computer to effect one or more functions of this  
17 invention. Furthermore, the present invention may be  
18 implemented as a program storage device readable by  
19 machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions  
20 executable by the machine to perform method steps for  
21 causing one or more functions of this invention.

22 It is noted that the foregoing has outlined some of the  
23 more pertinent objects and embodiments of the present  
24 invention. This invention may be used for many  
25 applications. Thus, although the description is made for  
26 particular arrangements and methods, the intent and concept  
27 of the invention is suitable and applicable to other  
28 arrangements and applications. It will be clear to those

1 skilled in the art that modifications to the disclosed  
2 embodiments can be effected without departing from the  
3 spirit and scope of the invention. The described  
4 embodiments ought to be construed to be merely illustrative  
5 of some of the more prominent features and applications of  
6 the invention. Other beneficial results can be realized by  
7 applying the disclosed invention in a different manner or  
8 modifying the invention in ways known to those familiar with  
9 the art.

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